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PICTURESQUE TOUR
ALONG THE
RIVERS GANGES AND JUMNA,
I N I N D I A:

CONSISTING OF

TWENTY-FOUR HIGHLY FINISHED AND COLOURED VIEWS, A MAP, AND VIGNETTES,

FROM ORIGINAL DRAWINGS MADE ON THE SPOT;

WITH

ILLUSTRATIONS, HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE.

BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL FORREST,
LATE ON THE STAFF OF HIS MAJESTY'S SERVICE IN BENGAL.



TOMB OF BUNIYAGURH, on the Jumna River.

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR BY J. B. DODS, 1838.

Picturesque Tour

ALONG

THE GANGES AND JUMNA.

CALCUTTA, the capital not only of Bengal but of all India, being the seat of government and residence of the governor-general and council, has been so much talked of, and so often described, that nothing new or interesting concerning it can be offered to the reader. The country in its immediate vicinity is flat and tame, sprinkled for the most part with the different varieties of the cocoa-nut and *palmyra*, or palm-tree. A traveller therefore, who visits Bengal from curiosity and a desire to explore its grander and wilder beauties, will not long tarry in its metropolis, but, deciding on the mode in which he will travel, make his preparations accordingly. These occupy but a short time, the natives being extremely handy and intelligent in all the various conveniences, or rather luxuries, requisite in moving with facility and comfort through this highly interesting country.

There are two modes of travelling used in India from the lower to the upper provinces; the one by land, the other by water. The latter is seldom chosen, except in the rainy season, when the winds are from the south-east, and blow sufficiently strong and steady to enable vessels to stem the very rapid currents encountered in many parts of the Ganges. A description of the establishment of a small fleet for these occasions may amuse such of my readers as have not visited India. The most usual vessels for this purpose are the pinnace and the budjerow. The former is generally preferred by Europeans, as being of a more roomy and stouter build, and

as sailing better, when the wind is not quite free, than the other. The pinnace has two masts, the larger or main-mast forward, and a small mizen: some have a top-mast and top-gallant. It is nearly flat-bottomed, and has a shallow keel. Its crew consists of a *mangee*, or master, and from twelve to twenty *dandies*, or boatmen, who tow the vessel by a long line when the wind fails, or trim the sails when it is favourable. These are a hardy race of beings, wear but little clothing, and though exposed in towing the boat for the whole day to a burning sun, and frequently up to the middle in water, their heads are not only without any turban or covering, but literally shaven quite bare. Their skull, probably from constant exposure, becomes hard and thick enough to resist the rays of the sun thus pouring on their naked sconces. The budjerow is a native-built vessel, round-bottomed, and much lighter than the pinnace; it has but one mast and a large lug-sail: it is by far the safest vessel of the two in the hands of the natives, as they better understand its management. Besides these two vessels, there are others appropriated solely for the servants; others as cooking-boats, for stores, &c.; and one for horses, which is fitted up as a complete stable. This fleet, when not favoured by wind, travels usually at the rate of about two miles per hour, so that twenty-five or thirty miles on the average are gained daily. It is customary to come-to close to the river's bank a little before sunset, to allow the crew and servants to cook their dinners; since there are some sects or casts of the Hindoos who must not eat on the water. At daylight all are again under weigh.

The season of the year, however, at which we were to move, was not favourable for a water excursion, the river being too low. To my great delight therefore a march by land was decided on, and all the requisite preparations for such an undertaking were set on foot with the greatest dispatch. Hands are so plentiful, and servants so numerous, in India, that what appears difficult and likely to occupy much time is performed with inconceivable expedition.

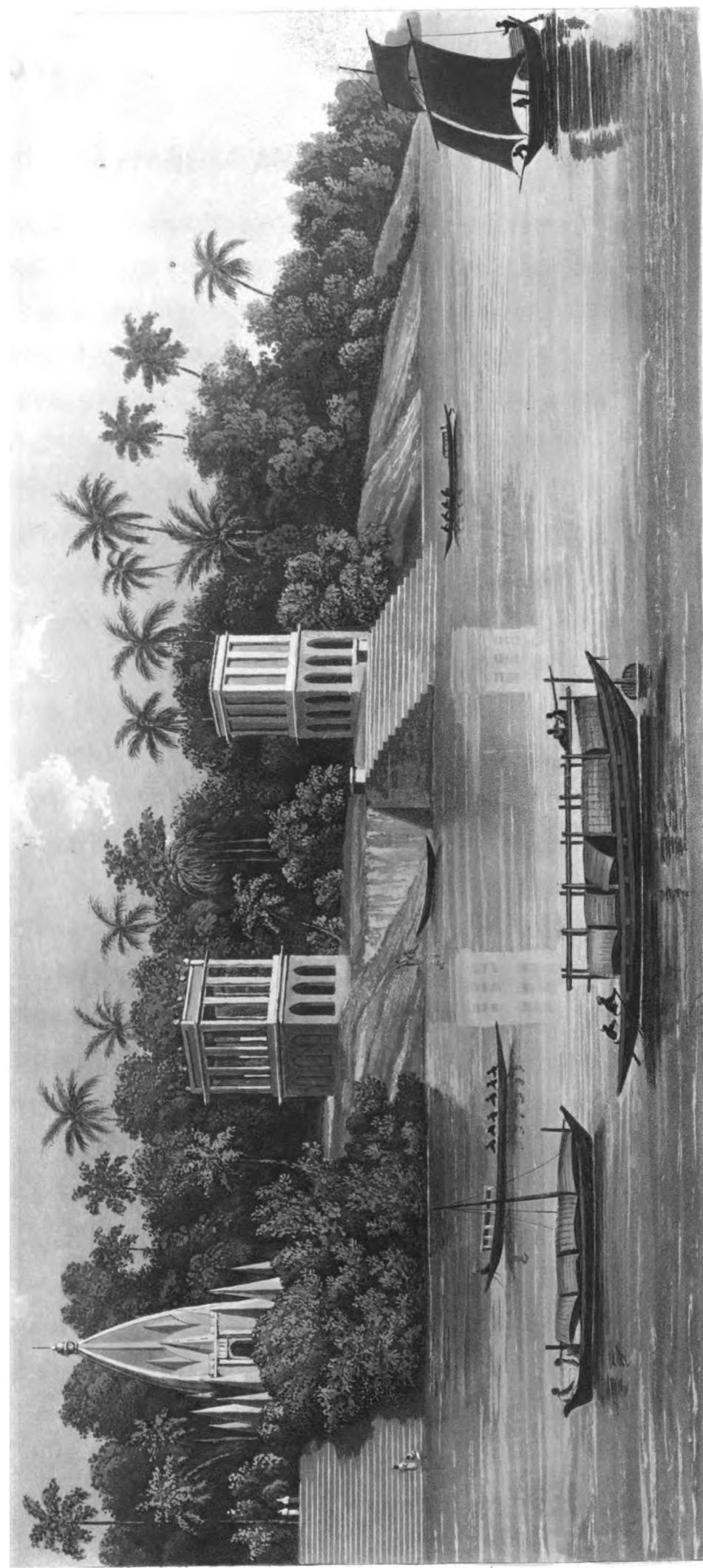
It may not be uninteresting to such of my readers as have not been in this country to give a slight sketch in this place of the retinue of servants, baggage-elephants, camels, horses, which, with a hundred et-ceteras, are indispensable on a journey by land. The best mode in which I can convey some idea of this is, by an enumeration of our party and its train, which, although it may appear large to some of my readers, contained not one individual more than comfort required. None accompanied us for mere state. Our party consisted of seven persons. We had three howdah-elephants, that is, animals trained for riding, hunting, and shooting, well broke, and with able *mahauts*, or leaders. Four others carried the camp-equipage, which consisted of two large marquees, each a sufficient load for an elephant, being about eighteen or twenty hundred weight. There were two smaller tents, besides others for the servants and guard of Sepoys; a light gig and horse, several saddle-horses, four palanquins, a cart, and hackery, or common cart of the country, with two bullocks to each. About two hundred servants and followers, and a guard of Sepoys, or native infantry, of forty men and a native officer, attended us.

The road called the old road was the route we proposed to take, although somewhat longer than the new; but as it was desirable to visit several cantonments of troops on the way, and as the supplies were more abundant upon this line, the former was preferred. The season was the very best for our purpose, having the whole of the cold weather before us. We left Calcutta the evening of the 2d Dec. 1807, and our first day's march was to Barrackpore, where is the country-seat of the governor-general: it is sixteen miles north of Calcutta, and most beautifully situated on the left bank of the river Hoogly, the principal navigable branch of the Ganges, and on which Calcutta is seated. The house is not remarkable either for size or accommodations, but it commands a fine and extensive view of the river, here about a quarter of a mile wide, having the old Danish settlement of Serampore on the opposite bank. The grounds of the domain are extensive, varied in feature, and

undulating in graceful swells, interspersed with patches of low wood and scattered trees, among which several neat bungalows, appropriated for the accommodation of the staff of the governor-general, are seen. In one part of the grounds is a menagerie, comprising a tolerable collection of the animals of this country. Among these are two fine young tigers, a large wild boar, a species of bear, native of the upper provinces, and designated by Buffon under the name of ant-eater; and another bear, of a species never before seen in this country, of which it is a native, and equally unknown I believe in Europe. It partakes both of the form and nature of the bear and mastiff-dog, having its body shaped like the former, with the clumsy and awkward action and long claws of that animal; but the round form of the head and short ears, the wiry and sleek black hair on the body, and, above all, the lapping up its drink, would stamp it of the dog kind: it has a deep orange band round its throat. It seemed tolerably tame, and ate roots and fruits with avidity. Here are also several very beautiful neil-gais, antelopes, spotted and hog deer, a moose-deer, and a sloth; and of birds, the flamingo, cyraus, pelicans, and a toucan; also several ostriches and cassowaries.

A short distance below Barrackpore, towards Calcutta, some very beautiful and picturesquely situated pagodas furnish the subject of the *First Plate*. They are built with the cutcha, or unburnt brick of the country, and covered with a coating of chunam (a fine stucco), as purely white as marble, and bearing as high a polish. These buildings are backed by a luxuriant growth of every variety of the palm tribe, united with the pliant bamboo, from the dark contrasting masses of which they relieve admirably; and the scene, viewed from the opposite bank of the river, is much enlivened by the quickly gliding boats, of every varied size and model, which are seen passing to and fro in great numbers on the expansive bosom of the Ganges.

Near the governor-general's house at Barrackpore are a large cantonment and permanent huts for four battalions of Sepoys, always stationed here. On the 3d



C. E. Bonet sculps.

MANADO, THE GOLDEN YELLOW PARADISE,
BY THE COTTONERS

1870

December, having sent off our heavy baggage to await our arrival at Hoogly, we crossed the river at Pulta Ghaut. The current here was so rapid, that to get the baggage, horses, &c. into the boats, crossing them, and swimming the elephants over, occupied three hours. Moved on again, and passing through Ghyretti, the French settlement of Chandenagurh, and also Chinsura, belonging to the Dutch, each containing the remains of a fort, we reached our tents at five o'clock in the evening.

On the following morning at sunrise we again moved on through a finely cultivated line of country, crossing several nullahs or channels, worn by the torrents in the rainy season, now nearly dry. Some of these exceed one hundred yards in breadth, and their beds being very deep, a large body of water must sometimes rush down them. We encamped near the small village of Nia Serai. The early part of this morning was so sharp and cold, that I found a fur pelisse very agreeable. The thermometer stood at noon in the shade at 76°, at night 50°. The country over which we passed the following day was mostly cultivated in rice-fields: the crops were off at this time, and the whole of the ground was cracked by the heat of the sun into fissures of a great depth. Near Inchura, where we halted, was a very extensive and beautiful piece of water left by the rains, called a *jeel*: we walked to it in the afternoon; it was covered with vast flights of teal and other birds of the duck kind; but although we had our guns with us, they were so wild, that we could not get one shot. During the greater part of this night we were tormented by the doleful yells and horrid cries of numerous packs of jackalls, who roam in the dark in search of prey, and visit the villages for plunder. Their cry very much resembles what might be supposed to be that of a human being under the most excruciating torture. Sleep was out of the question.

7th December. Road still over rice-grounds, and very bad riding; we were compelled also to ford several wide and extensive *jeels*, all shallow. Passed Ambooah, a small village on the Hoogly river; and near it, on a projecting point, a small se-

cluded Hindoo village, embosomed in a verdant group of the richest foliage. Its small and pretty pagoda or temple, of a reddish stone, rears its cone-like form above the wooded screen which surrounds it; and, with some of the singularly formed boats, with their matted or bamboo awnings, produced on the whole a scene highly characteristic of this portion of the Ganges. It is represented in *Plate II.*

One mile beyond Ambooah is Culna, a large Hindoo village, close upon the bank. A short distance beyond this, in a bend of the river, the ground was covered, for an extent of full half a mile, with human skulls, washed up and left by the floods in the last rainy season. We here saw a species of the banian tree, called the *peepul*: it was filled with green parrots and monkeys, who seemed to vie with each other which could make the greatest noise. Hence the road was exceeding good to Mirzapore, on high ground; the Hoogly river on our right, and a richly wooded country to our left.

It was our daily practice to send forward a small tent at midnight, with the breakfast apparatus for the following morning, so that on arriving at our new ground we found that meal always ready; and by the time it was completed, unless when the march was an unusually long one, the other tents were up, and in one hour more our little town was perfectly established.

Next morning we were at Commeera, and the following at Aughadeep. We crossed the Hoogly river by a ferry at Chandengurh, where the stream is about 200 yards wide: it is the westernmost branch of the Delta of the Ganges.

We now succeeded in getting our encampment regularly pitched, and more compact than at our first starting. We had some difficulty to prevail upon the natives to come into our plan, but by persevering they did so; and we found it much easier to guard at night from the expert thieves, who are always on the look-out for plunder, especially when Europeans pass their villages.

On the 10th we encamped, and passed the night on the celebrated field of Plassy;

INDOOR VILLAGE on the GANGES.

PRINTED.

London Printed by T. STOBART, Strand, 1829.



where a decisive and obstinately contested battle took place between the Company's troops under Colonel, afterwards Lord Clive, and the Nuwab of Moorshedabad, in which the latter was totally defeated.

Having passed the village of Burrah on the following day, we turned off the main road, which proceeds to the cantonment of Berhampore, to Jungipore, having engaged ourselves to pass a short time with a civilian of rank resident there, at whose hospitable mansion we remained four days.

On the 17th we again proceeded on our journey, and advancing through the Island of Cossimbazar, passed in the course of our route several of those bunds, or banks, erected for the purpose of preventing the waters of the river from overflowing the island in the rainy season.

I once had occasion to proceed on duty from Calcutta to Berhampore on the Cossimbazar river, a branch of the Ganges, which, uniting with another, the Jellinghy, at Nuddea, forms the Hoogly river, which descends to Calcutta, and is the only free and uninterrupted communication by water between that capital and the Upper Ganges.

I left Calcutta in the month of August, and in the height of the rainy season, it having poured incessantly for six weeks. Our pinnace ascended the Hoogly, and passing Barrackpore, soon after entered a perfect sea, for the expanse of waters had no visible bounds. We continued to run thus over the country through patches of wood, and every now and then passed villages, perched either on the summit of mounds, artificially constructed, or on small natural hills; some of these rearing their spiral pagodas, white as alabaster, with their straw-thatched bamboo cabins, backed by a rich group of wood, in which the palmyra reared its towering height and fan-like leaves, the bamboo waved its graceful and feathery branches, and the plantain threw around its immense leaves of the most vivid green in every fantastic

form: these, and the groups of the admiring natives, eagerly gazing on our passing fleet, formed, on the whole, a singularly striking and interesting scene. This apparently destructive flood, an epithet with which it would assuredly be coupled in most regions of the world, is here the greatest blessing heaven can bestow: it spreads fertility and plenty over the tract it seems to devastate, and renders Bengal one of the richest and most flourishing provinces of the earth. We occasionally came upon the river where the channel was deep, and there the current was excessively rapid. We stopped the whole of one day near the village of Cutwah, which is situated on the right bank of the Hoogly, and extends along it a considerable distance: it has numerous ghauts, of one of which a view is given (*Plate III.*), with the Hindoo pagoda attached, and some of the larger boats of the country, used for the transport of merchandise.

The upper part of the Cossimbazar branch of the Ganges is exposed sometimes to more danger: there, when the river has a very sudden rise, it pours so great a mass of its waters into the numerous channels extending from the mouth of the Jellinghy to that of the Cossimbazar, near the village of Sooty, which all unite in the Hoogly below, forming the Cossimbazar Island, that the bed of the latter stream is unable to contain the congregated flood pouring into it from every direction; the waters are arrested, and consequently rise far higher than they can do below this obstacle.

To guard against this pressure of the waters, bunds or banks, of great height and immense solidity, have, by the direction of the East India Company, been constructed, and are kept up at a vast expense: still, the art of man is not equal to cope with the efforts of Nature; massive as these bounds are, they are but too often carried away, when a scene of destruction ensues not easily to be described.

I have passed, in descending from the upper provinces, through some of these branches of the Cossimbazar river: the velocity with which the stream hurried us onwards, and the wonderful effects evident at every turn on the soft yielding matter of which its banks were composed, produced an indescribable sensation of admiration.



G. Hunt sculps.

CHALUT OF CUTTBAL,
or the Islands.

London: Published by S. & J. THOMAS, 10, Newgate-street.



PLATE IV
T. Sutherland sculp

MARKET OF THE CITY OF MYSORE DABAD,
ANOTHER CAPITAL OF HINDOSTAN.

London: Published by R. & J. DODS, 1830. Printed by G. Virtue.

mingled with terror, as we contemplated the foaming and furious torrent, lashing in the most angry manner all obstacles which it encountered in its course, hurrying banks and rocks and large trees before it like straws, while our boat most rapidly glided over its turbulent bosom in perfect safety.

The skill and judgment of the crew of our vessel were wonderful where the river took a sudden turn: the helm was useless, and here the greatest presence of mind was requisite in the one at the head, who, with surprising force and agility, darting his long bamboo pole against the opposing bank, turned the vessel in an instant into the new direction. Never can the impression made by this scene be effaced; never have I seen it equalled, save in the rapids of the mighty rivers of the Canadas. They not only equal but surpass it, in the superior vastness of their torrents, and the more wild, imposing, and gigantic character of their scenery.

Being anxious to see the ancient capital of the soubah of Bengal, always esteemed the finest, most important, and richest province of the empire, I this morning rode in that direction, though our party took a shorter route by the direct road, when I soon reached and entered Moorshedabad by a large and massive gateway of brick, covered with a coating of stucco; the parapet was pierced with embrasures for cannon, but there were none mounted. The city itself is wretched in the extreme, a mass of poor and mean sheds, some having the walls built of mud, others of the bamboo split and interwoven: there were a few brick square-built houses of one story, with flat roofs. The streets were narrow and filthily dirty, and I found the ride through the city sickening and tiresome in the highest degree. Its length is full seven miles. The view from the river is the best, and is given in *Plate IV.*

On the following day, the Nuwab of Bengal came in state to pay a visit of ceremony to the general officer commanding the station. He was received with a royal salute from the guns of the garrison of Berhampore. His train of attendants were attired in very gaudy, though at the same time shabby, apparel.

The order of the procession on this occasion was as follows: Several *hircarahs* or out-runners with silver staffs led the way, proclaiming aloud the titles of the Nuwab. Two men mounted on camels, called *shutur sewars*, followed; then a drum and trumpet on horseback, succeeded by the banner of the soubahship, carried by a man on a very large elephant. Then followed a number of smaller flags, which designated the rank his highness bore in the empire; the body guard of cavalry, and a guard of native militia; next his highness's state palanquin, borne on men's shoulders; a band of music; and immediately behind this the Nuwab, in a magnificently gilt and splendidly decorated car, followed by his prime vizir in a smaller one. Several of his officers came next mounted on horseback; and the procession was closed by about twenty elephants, as many camels, all in state trappings, and some state *ruths* (or small waggons used for carrying the women), drawn by the Hindoostanee bullocks of a large size.

On the following day we came upon the main body of the Ganges, which we had not yet seen: it is here an immense and grand expanse of water, rather resembling an inland sea than a river. The opposite shore, being very low and flat, was scarcely to be distinguished; and looking up the stream, it had apparently no bounds.

After marching mostly by the bank of the Ganges for four more days, we began to lose traces of cultivation, and to encounter occasional tracts of jungle. On one occasion we came to a nullah, 40 or 50 yards wide, which for a time puzzled us to cross. There was a wooden bridge over it, and all the horses, carts, and persons on foot passed in safety, although its construction did not appear very strong: but no inducements, no urging, could prevail upon the loaded baggage-elephants to attempt it; when brought up to it they expressed the greatest alarm, striking the flooring of the bridge with their trunks, which seemed to convince them at once of its insufficiency to bear their ponderous bulk. The bed of the nullah was too shallow in

water for them to swim, and too deep in mud to ford. No resource remained but to try the experiment of unloading the elephants, pass them over the bridge light, and carry their loads after them. This was accordingly done, and perfectly comprehended by these sagacious animals, who now walked over cheerfully and confidently.

In expectation of some sport, being now in the vicinity of the Rajmahal hills, a group of mountains, which in this part separates the provinces of Bengal and Bahar, we halted one entire day at the village of Futhipore, and having procured from thence a *shekari*, or in plain English, a poacher, well acquainted with the haunts of the different species of game with which these hills abound, we mounted our elephants, for it is thus that Indian sportsmen take the field, and formed a party of eight or nine persons. Several baggage-elephants with our servants accompanied us to beat the jungles, and a great many persons from the village with long bamboo poles volunteered for the same service, with a tribe of their common pariah or village dogs.

We saw, on entering the jungle, a great quantity of game of various sorts, as the wild buffaloes, hog-deer, wild hog, deer of different kinds, partridges, and chuck-ores (a large species of the partridge); florikens, a small species of the bustard, and the common domestic barn-door fowl of England in great numbers, called here the jungle fowl; and when we found open spots with partial cultivated fields, quail in great quantities, and very tame. We had a very pleasant day's sport, but our reward was only some of the partridges and quail. We got several shots at the buffaloes, and several we could hear distinctly hit; but the common leaden ounce-ball has no effect on these tough-skinned animals, unless it chances to hit a vital part, behind the ear, or fore-leg. The two-ounce rifle, with pewter balls, to be certain of your shot, the tiger and buffalo both require.

In the course of the day we came upon the tracks of a rhinoceros, several of which are found on these hills; we followed them some time, in hopes of coming up

with him: in some parts he appeared to have very recently passed, since the water was still muddy where he had trodden. Our pursuit was, however, in vain.

I had never entered so deeply into the jungles as I did this day, and I felt much delighted with the extremely curious scene they in several parts presented. The height of the grass struck me as particularly wonderful. I was mounted on a very fine elephant, not less than eleven feet high; the howdah, or seat fastened on the animal's back, must have been full two feet higher, it being strapped on a very thick pad: this would give thirteen feet. Now when standing upright, the attitude usually adopted by sportsmen when beating the jungle in order to see better around them, my head must have been near nineteen feet above the ground; but the grass was generally three, and in some places six, feet higher than my head. The stalks were full an inch and a half in diameter, and it would be almost impossible, certainly very fatiguing, to attempt to force a passage on foot through such a thicket, independent of the chance of meeting with a tiger on a sudden—by no means a pleasant *rencontre*.

Having satisfied ourselves with sporting, at the first open spot we found, which I perfectly recollect was a beautiful small natural meadow, surrounded on all sides by high jungles, and having a sweet clear stream trickling through its centre, we alighted from our elephants, sending them to get some forage for themselves, and then sat down very sociably to examine the contents of our provision-basket: we found it very well supplied, and our long ramble through the jungles made us do full justice to its contents. We were in fact enjoying ourselves much; our elephants had gone out of sight, and we were occupied with an ice-cold bottle of most excellent madeira, cooled in our spring, when a sudden and angry snort, not far from us, made us jump up in a hurry on our feet. We saw an immensely large and fierce male buffalo, wild and savage, who was glaring upon our party with his eyes of living fire and his scowling angry front. The male wild buffalo, when met in this

solitary state, is supposed to have been driven from the herd of favourite females by more powerful rivals: he is therefore always inclined to mischief, and is said to be more bold and ferocious than the tiger himself. Whether our present visitor was in this state or not, we were uncertain; the number of our party perhaps awed him. We called out lustily, however, for our elephants: they were, fortunately, within call. The first that came up were mounted by some of our party, who made for the buffalo with their guns all ready: he, however, turned tail, and entered the low jungle, declining battle. They got two shots at him, but whether they took effect or not, he disappeared, and we saw no more of him.

On the following day, 24th December, we passed the Ouda-nullah by a handsome Pucka bridge. This nullah is very large and deep, and a vast torrent must rush through it after the rainy season. Six miles further is the village of Rajmahal, and the ruins of a very grand and fine palace, the former residence of the nuwab, soubah, or viceroy of the province of Bahar: it is well situated on a most commanding eminence, its foot washed by the Ganges, here a noble river, of which it commands a fine view on one side, and on the other an equally grand one of the Rajmahal range of mountains.

Next day we passed the large nullah of Sirkunda, near which is the ruin of a noble building, a *dowlut kana*, or palace erected by Shah Jehan, emperor of Hindoostan, which must once have been a grand pile, and encamped at Mussaw. The Rajmahal hills were now very close to us, and presented a beautiful sight. Their forms are varied, but all swelling in gentle undulations. They are clothed with wood apparently throughout almost their whole extent: nevertheless there are cleared spots within their retired valleys, and some of the mountains even are deprived of their wood. It is singular that the race of people inhabiting these mountains, by no means inaccessible, should totally differ in stature, feature, language, manners, customs, and religion, from the Hindoos all around them. I walked one evening into the country

for some three or four miles, and met a few of these people: one of them talked a little in the common Hindoostanee. They were all nearly naked; the hair tied in a knot at the top of the head. They were well made, but rather low in stature, and carried bows made of bamboo, and arrows. They appeared mild and friendly, and their manner was prepossessing.

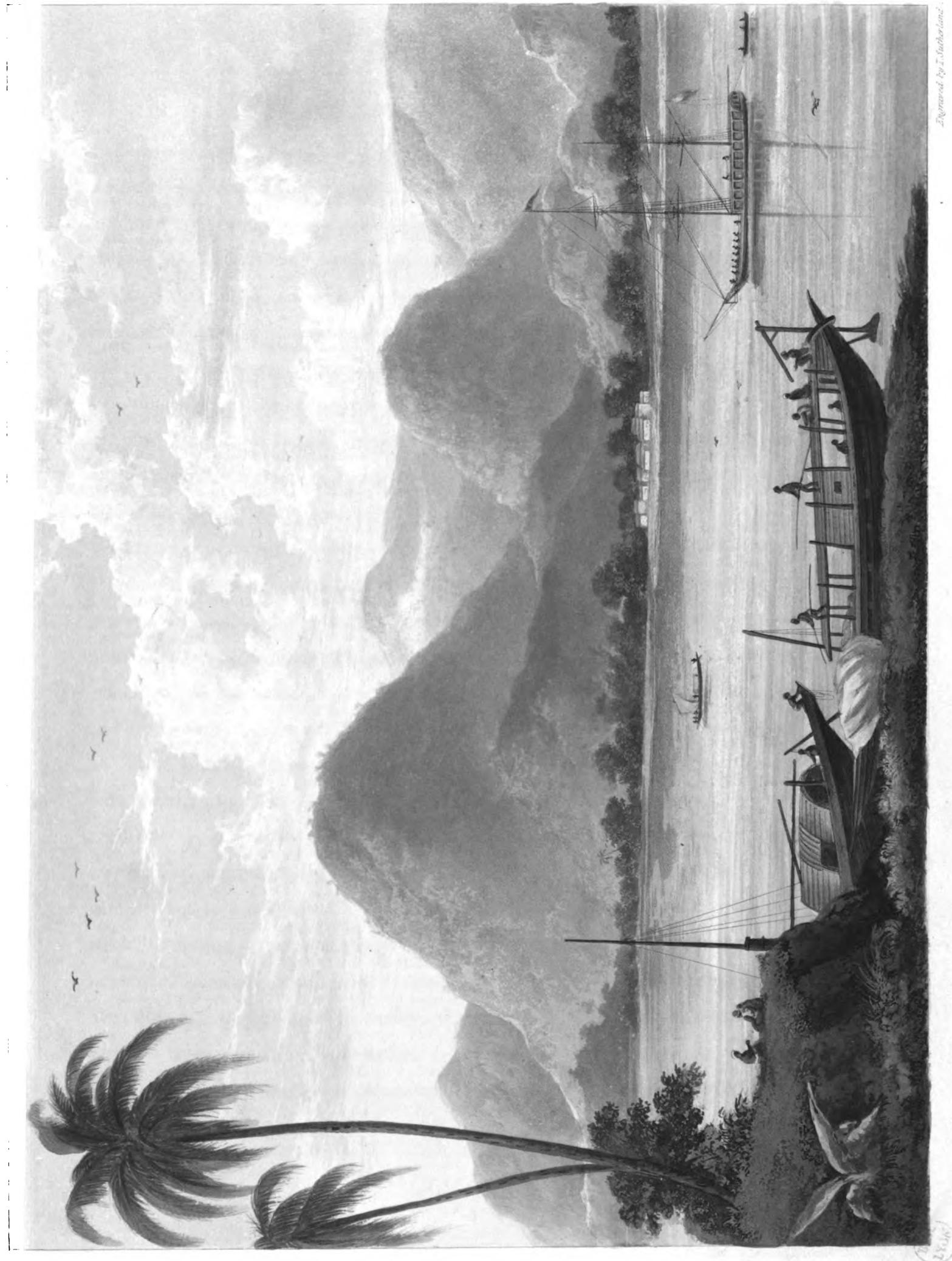
A corps was formed from among the natives of the Rajmahal group of mountains, and called the Hill-Rangers: they behaved well, and were far from indifferent soldiers.

I took a small boat this evening, and rowed out to some distance from the shore, to obtain a better view of the hills, and judge more accurately of their height. Several very beautiful breaks offered themselves as the sun sank behind them; and one, which I have included in the views (*Plate V.*) was the most picturesque.

Having now reached the northern confines of the province of Bengal Proper, and being about to enter that of Bahar, a few observations and remarks on the ancient and modern state, productions and general features of the surface of the province we have just traversed, may not be here inappropriate.

The rich and beautiful valley of the Ganges, extending from the bay of Bengal on the south, along both banks of that river, to the point whence it issues from the mountainous chain which bounds Hindoostan on the north, a distance of nearly fourteen hundred miles, is at present in possession of Great Britain.

This wonderfully fertile tract of country originally formed the empire of the Prasii and Gangaridæ, as described by the earlier Greek historians. These empires, being swept away by the enterprising and sanguinary Mahomedan invaders from the western parts of Asia, became transformed into mere provinces of the new empire of which these warriors were the founders. These comprised the provinces of Oude, Bengal, Bahar, Allahabad, and part of Agra; and as such they exist to this day. At the early period we have alluded to above, from the best authority to be obtained, the city of Cannouge was the capital of this vast empire: it is considered by some



Mountains of Rājā Mahāl.

MOUNTAINS OF RĀJĀ MAHĀL.
BRAHMIN, 1830. (See also page 100.)

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writers as the same to which the ancients gave the name of Palibothra. Strabo describes it as situated at the confluence of another river with the Ganges, and its form as that of a vast quadrangle, in length eighty stadia, equal to about ten English miles, and in breadth fifteen stadia, or two miles, surrounded by a fortification constructed with wood, on which were built five hundred and seventy high towers. Its number of gateways amounted to sixty-five; and the whole circumference was protected by a vast fosse or ditch, exceeding 200 yards in breadth, and 45 feet deep. Pliny and Arrian both concur in this account.

The province of Bengal Proper is bounded on the south by the bay of that name, on the north by a range of mountains, on the east is Aracan and part of Assam, and Bahar borders it on the west.

The *Ayeen Acberi*, a book compiled by order of the great Acber, emperor of Hindoostan, at the close of the fifteenth century, when that country was at its highest pinnacle of glory, and which gives a very clear and detailed account of every province of the empire, their produce, population, and every thing connected with them, has estimated the extent of the soubahship of Bengal at four hundred koss in length, and two hundred in breadth, the koss being nearly two English miles.

There is not perhaps in any part of the world a tract of country which can compare with it in fertility, if we except Egypt, which in this respect it very nearly resembles. It is watered by the vast and majestic Ganges, which glides through its centre, and which, on the subsiding of the waters of its periodical floods, spreads a rich deposit to a considerable extent from its banks, and joined by several smaller streams running at right angles nearly with this their great channel, descends to the ocean. Numerous canals also, formed by the industry of man, intersecting in all directions the vast plain of its valley, diffuse a most luxuriant verdure and abundant harvests throughout its whole extent.

The climate of Bengal is comparatively temperate when contrasted with that of

the upper provinces: it is not subject to the hot and parching winds of the latter, which prevail for three months in the year, from March to June; and from its situation south of the tropical line, the sun twice passes it within a short space of time, producing a long rainy season, and consequently much cloudy weather. The rains on an average are computed to continue for nearly six months. The violent and frequent storms of thunder also tend, no doubt, to refresh the atmosphere and reduce its temperature. These rains sometimes commence so early as April, but more commonly in the beginning of June.

The Ganges itself has been held in such repute from the earliest times, that the Hindoos entertain a sacred and religious veneration for its waters. One of their most solemn oaths is on its holy stream; and the wealthy Hindoos, who reside many of them at the distance of several days' journey from its banks, have a daily supply of its waters for the purposes of religious ablution.

Some particular parts of this river are considered far more sacred than others; and here immense crowds of the Hindoos, at stated periods, or at their great festivals, are collected for the purposes of devotion, and pass hours and even whole days in its purifying waters.

Independent of these supernatural qualities, however, applied to the water of the Ganges, it has properties really valuable to mankind: it is sweet and wholesome, and may, it is said, be kept for years without being subject to putrefaction.

The rice is the species of grain most cultivated in Bengal, as it delights in a moist soil, and flourishes particularly within reach of the periodical floods. This plant is sometimes so luxuriant and prolific, that the produce of one single grain has been known to yield a measure equal to four pounds weight. The rice possesses another remarkable quality, which deserves notice in this place: in proportion as the inundations of the Ganges rise, the rice extends its stalk even to the length of fifteen or twenty feet, and never permits its head to be immersed in the water.